

Attachment 2

Testimony – March 9, 2015 – H189

1. Mr. Chairman and members of this Committee – my name is Stacey Carson and I am vice president of operations at the Idaho Hospital Association. I am here today on behalf of the Idaho Telehealth Council of which I currently serve as chairman. I appreciate having the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 189.
2. Last year the Idaho legislature passed House Concurrent Resolution 46 and the Idaho Telehealth Council was convened to coordinate and develop a comprehensive set of standards, policies, rules and procedures for the use of telehealth and telemedicine in Idaho. The governor-appointed Council is comprised of (5) physician/provider representatives (including the IMA), (6) hospital representatives (including the IHA), (7) payer representatives, (2) regulatory agency representatives (including the Idaho Board of Medicine), (1) public health representative (Bureau of Public Health), and a representative from the Idaho Primary Care Association.
3. The Council has been meeting regularly since July. House Bill 189 is a result of many hours of work by members of this Council which included a comprehensive review of policies from many other states and examination of guidelines offered by standard setters such as the American Telemedicine Association and the Federation of State Medical Boards. I might add that during this exercise we learned that many states are doing similar policy work to ensure the safe use of telehealth in practice. The Council took great care to balance IMPROVED ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE with PATIENT SAFETY. After many drafts, an attorney review process, and vetting with many stakeholders, the Council has taken a position of support on H189.
4. Telehealth plays a vital role as Idaho strives to achieve the triple aim to improve: 1) quality of care; 2) population health; and, 3) affordability of healthcare. The appropriate use of telehealth technologies offers healthcare providers, hospitals, and health plans ways to provide improved access to healthcare. Telehealth can deliver safe, secure and cost saving access to healthcare for Idahoans and can bring care into clinical as well as non-clinical settings. Telehealth helps address barriers to access due to provider shortages, improves access to specialty physicians, and can keep care closer to home. Despite healthcare provider shortages, providers are sometimes reluctant to practice using telemedicine technology in Idaho and payers are reluctant to reimburse due to unclear policy.

5. Healthcare providers need clear guidance for delivering care using telehealth in Idaho and patients need to know they can trust the care they receive via telehealth is safe and secure. Patient safety has been paramount to the Council members as we acknowledge the opportunities and the impact technology has had, and will continue to have, on the practice of medicine and the delivery of healthcare services in Idaho.

6. The main highlights of the Act include the following elements:
 - Patient-provider relationships can be established without an in-person visit using two-way audio and video and maintained using electronic communications (phone, email, etc);
 - Prescription drug orders can be issued using telehealth services with some parameters;
 - The bill Increases access to healthcare while enabling providers to deliver safe & high quality care;
 - The bill promotes continuity of care and requires providers to obtain a good medical history and adequate documentation that is secure and available to the patient and other providers.
 - The bill supports multi-disciplinary collaboration such as patient-centered medical homes.
 - Telehealth services can be delivered within the provider's scope of license and consistent with the current standards of care.

7. In summary, I thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the Idaho Telehealth Council's work and testimony in support of House Bill 189.